



# NEWMAN CATHOLIC TRUST

HEART SPEAKS TO HEART

## Flexible Working Policy 2025-26

### Review

Review Cycle	Date of Policy	Reviewed by	Review Date
Annual	Sept 25	FBM	Sept 26

### Ratification

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Chair of Board	Chris Izuka		22/7/25
CEO	Dr Daniel Doyle		22/7/25

### *Commitment to Equality:*

*The Trust and its schools are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.*

***"Rooted in faith, we ignite a love of learning, foster inclusive education and empower every individual to achieve their utmost potential."***

At the Newman Catholic Trust, we stand united in our unwavering mission to nurture a transformative educational experience, where every child is seen, valued, and cherished as a unique gift from God. Rooted in faith, we ignite a love for learning that awakens curiosity, sparks imagination, and fuels a lifelong journey of discovery.

Guided by the teachings of Christ and inspired by the profound wisdom of our namesake, Saint John Henry Newman, we strive to foster a community where inclusion is lived, diversity is embraced, and every individual is empowered to fulfil their highest potential. As Newman said, *"To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often."* We believe that education is a sacred journey of continual transformation—intellectually, spiritually, and personally. We believe that true education is not just about knowledge, but about shaping hearts and minds, cultivating resilience, and nurturing the whole person.

Our vision is simple yet profound: to be a beacon of hope and excellence, where students are not only academically accomplished but spiritually enriched and personally empowered to make a difference in the world. In all that we do, we strive to embody our core values:

- **Christ/Child Centred:** Placing the Gospel values, the teachings of Christ and the well-being of each child at the heart of every action we take.
- **Inclusive and Consultative:** Ensuring open communication and engagement with all members of our community.
- **Caring:** Showing empathy, understanding, and support in navigating any challenges that may arise.
- **Transparent:** Fostering openness and honesty in all our interactions.
- **Strategic:** Approaching all matters with careful planning and consideration for the wider community.
- **Professional:** Maintaining the highest standards of conduct and integrity in our decision-making.
- **Accountable:** Taking responsibility for our actions and fulfilling our commitment to ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for all.

## **1. Introduction**

The Newman Catholic Trust is committed to cultivating a professional culture rooted in dignity, inclusion and compassion, where all colleagues are valued, developed and enabled to thrive. We believe that excellence in Catholic education can only be sustained through a workforce that is empowered, supported and shaped by a clear vocation to serve. Flexible working plays an important role in sustaining wellbeing, retaining talent and enabling equity across our staff body, while ensuring that the needs of our schools and pupils are fully met.

This policy provides a clear, fair and structured framework for requesting flexible working in accordance with statutory provisions and best practice. It applies to all employees of the Trust and reflects our legal duties under the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023, including the right to request flexible working from day one of employment and the requirement to respond to requests within two months.

As a Trust, we recognise the benefits that flexible working arrangements can offer for staff motivation, recruitment and retention, and in enabling staff to manage personal responsibilities and commitments. However, we also acknowledge the operational constraints within educational settings, including the safeguarding, continuity, curriculum and cover requirements that must be fulfilled for our children to be safe and receive the best possible education.

While every flexible working request will be considered fairly and objectively, not all roles can accommodate all forms of flexibility. School-based roles in particular may present limitations due to the need for direct supervision of pupils and consistent staffing arrangements. Decisions will therefore reflect the context of each role and the school's wider operational capacity. Line managers must seek advice from the Trust's HR partners on complex cases to ensure lawful and consistent application. All flexible working requests and outcomes must be recorded centrally via Every HR to ensure accurate record keeping at school and Trust level. This includes trial periods, formal changes to terms and conditions and reviews.

The CEO retains ultimate responsibility for the oversight of HR matters across the Trust. HR support is provided by commissioned external professionals who have been consulted on this policy and are available to advise on its implementation.

The Trust is committed to:

- Ensuring that flexible working requests are treated equitably and transparently
- Promoting a culture in which open conversations about flexibility are encouraged
- Balancing the operational needs of the Trust and its schools with the needs of individual staff
- Embedding our core values of fairness, responsibility, and Christian stewardship into all people management practices

Employees making a request for flexible working are encouraged to reflect on the potential implications for their role, team and the continuity of provision for pupils. Principals and leaders must ensure that requests are considered in a timely and lawful manner, that decisions are communicated clearly, and that appropriate record keeping and contractual changes are made.

This policy is underpinned by our shared Catholic ethos and commitment to serving others through thoughtful, compassionate and just leadership.

## **2. Purpose and Scope**

This policy sets out the Newman Catholic Trust's approach to flexible working. It provides a consistent, fair and lawful framework for managing flexible working requests across all Trust schools and departments. Its purpose is to enable open, professional conversations about flexibility while ensuring the needs of children, staff and schools are carefully balanced.

Flexible working is a mechanism that allows employees to request changes to the pattern, location or number of hours they work. It can support a range of needs, including childcare, eldercare, health conditions, study, volunteering, or transitions into retirement. It can also support better wellbeing, job

satisfaction and staff retention when managed well. As such, it aligns directly with our Trust's commitment to inclusivity, vocation and the development of a flourishing workforce.

This policy is rooted in the legal framework provided by the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Equality Act 2010, and the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023. It reflects the latest statutory provisions, including:

- The right to request flexible working from the **first day of employment**
- The right to make **two requests per 12-month period**
- A statutory duty for the employer to consider requests **reasonably and without discrimination**
- A requirement for the Trust to reach a decision **within two months** of receipt, unless an extension is agreed
- A prohibition on requiring employees to set out the effects of the requested change (although this may still support a more informed process)

This policy applies to **all employees** of the Newman Catholic Trust, regardless of role, contractual status or length of service. This includes:

- All staff employed in Trust schools, including teachers, support staff and leaders
- Staff employed in the central Trust team
- Part-time and full-time staff, term-time only and all-year-round staff

It **does not** apply to:

- Temporary or agency workers employed through third-party contracts
- Flexible working requests made outside the formal procedure (although informal flexibility may be agreed at local level where appropriate)
- Requests related to phased return from long-term absence or ill-health (governed by Occupational Health advice and managed through the Sickness and Absence Policy)

Within this policy, the following terms apply:

- **Flexible working** means a formal change to working hours, days or location that becomes part of the employee's contract
- **Principal** refers to the most senior leader in a school and the designated decision-maker for school-based staff
- **Line manager** refers to the person with day-to-day oversight of the employee, including central Trust leaders and school-based leaders where appropriate
- **The Trust** refers to the collective governance and leadership body of the Newman Catholic Trust, under the ultimate oversight of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- **HR support** is provided by external commissioned providers (Dataplan) and is supported by our external HR consultants (Capita), who offer professional guidance on request and have been consulted in the development of this policy

The Trust is committed to ensuring that:

- All flexible working requests are considered objectively and without bias
- Staff are supported to understand their rights and engage constructively in the process
- Leaders are equipped with the guidance, documentation and professional advice needed to make fair and lawful decisions
- Flexible working is promoted as part of a wider culture of dignity, vocation and professional trust

Where a request is agreed, the employee's contract will be formally amended and a record will be held within **Every HR** and the employee's personnel file.

Where a request is declined, the reasons must be provided in writing and be consistent with one or more of the statutory business grounds for refusal.

### 3. Legal Context

This policy has been developed in accordance with the statutory provisions of the **Employment Rights Act 1996**, as amended by the **Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023**, which came into force on 6 April 2024. It is also underpinned by the **Equality Act 2010**, particularly in relation to the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

From 6 April 2024, employees are legally entitled to:

- Make **two formal flexible working requests** in any 12-month period (previously one)
- Submit a request **from day one** of employment (removing the former 26-week qualifying period)
- Expect a decision **within two months**, unless a longer period is mutually agreed
- No longer be required to explain the potential impact of their request on the organisation

The Trust acknowledges these changes and will ensure they are embedded in all practice.

In line with this, any flexible working request will be:

- Treated as a statutory request unless clearly marked as informal
- Considered in light of the Trust's duty under employment law, education legislation and its obligation to maintain safeguarding standards and operational continuity
- Addressed without discrimination, particularly relating to protected characteristics (such as disability, sex, age or maternity)
- Assessed in good faith and with due regard to staff wellbeing, educational delivery and long-term sustainability

While the Trust remains committed to enabling flexible working wherever possible, each request must be carefully balanced against:

- The needs of pupils and continuity of provision
- Availability and cost of appropriate cover
- Impact on staff workload and team functionality
- Safeguarding and supervision requirements
- Implications for timetable, curriculum delivery or leadership coverage

All decisions will be made in accordance with the framework set out in this policy and recorded centrally.

### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

To ensure the fair, transparent and legally compliant operation of this policy, the following responsibilities apply:

#### Board of Directors

- Ratify this policy and ensure it aligns with employment law and the Trust's mission
- Monitor implementation across the Trust through high-level data reporting
- Review anonymised case patterns or emerging risks through the People Committee or equivalent governance route

#### Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- Has overall responsibility for interpreting and implementing this policy
- Reviews and decides on complex or disputed cases, or where Principals seek escalation
- Ensures the Trust's external HR providers (Dataplan, Capita or others) are consulted where needed
- Monitors practice and equity across schools, and ensures this policy is regularly reviewed

#### Principals

- Act as the decision-maker for all school-based staff requests
- Engage with staff professionally and compassionately when requests are received
- Evaluate the operational impact of any proposed change and consult with the CEO where needed
- Ensure outcomes are communicated promptly and documented
- Record all requests, outcomes and variations using the school's HR system (e.g. Every HR) and provide updates to the central Trust

**Line Managers (e.g. central team supervisors or senior school staff with HR responsibilities)**

- Are the first point of discussion when an employee wishes to explore flexible working
- Help staff shape realistic, clearly defined requests
- Refer the request to the appropriate decision-maker (e.g. Principal or CEO)
- Support the implementation of any approved arrangements

#### **Employees**

- Have the right to make up to two statutory flexible working requests per year
- Must submit their request in writing using the Trust's approved form
- Are encouraged to discuss potential options informally with their manager in advance
- Are expected to engage professionally with any dialogue or review about the request
- Understand that approval is not automatic and depends on multiple factors

#### **External HR Providers (e.g. Dataplan, Capita)**

- Provide professional HR advice to the Trust and its leaders as required
- Support legal compliance and resolution of complex cases
- Offer model templates, updates and risk assessments when reviewing arrangements

### **5. Types of Flexible Working**

Flexible working may take many forms. This policy is designed to enable structured, contractual changes to an employee's working pattern. The following are examples of the types of flexible working that may be requested. This list is not exhaustive:

#### **a) Part-Time Working**

Working fewer hours than a full-time contract. This may include working reduced hours each day, or fewer days each week. Part-time arrangements must ensure continuity and appropriate curriculum or service coverage.

#### **b) Job Share**

Two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time post. This requires clear delineation of duties, aligned working styles and agreed handover arrangements. Both employees are jointly accountable for the role.

#### **c) Staggered Hours**

Employees start and finish work at different times. This may be used in operational support roles (e.g. site staff or administration) to extend cover or meet personal needs.

#### **d) Annualised Hours**

The total number of hours worked in a year is fixed, but the pattern varies according to demand. This may apply in roles where there is seasonal or fluctuating workload.

#### **e) Remote or Hybrid Working**

In some central or non-pupil-facing roles, employees may request to work some or all of their contracted hours from home or off-site. This must be risk-assessed and compatible with the nature of the role. For teaching staff and classroom-based support, this would generally not be applicable.

#### **f) Term-Time Only**

Some staff may request to work only during school term time. This is common in support roles but may also be considered for other posts where feasible.

#### **g) Temporary Changes**

Employees may request a fixed-term change to working pattern (e.g. for a period of study, caring responsibilities or during a transitional phase of life). These can be reviewed and reverted at a pre-agreed point.

**h) Phased retirement:** gradually reducing working hours and/or responsibilities to transition from full-time work to full-time retirement.

All forms of flexible working must be evaluated in terms of:

- Continuity of safeguarding and supervision
- Pupil outcomes and class stability (for teaching staff)
- Impact on team operations, cover and communication
- Capacity to manage workload within new parameters
- Fairness to colleagues and sustainability for the setting
- Ability to carry out duties in line with job description, school and statutory requirements

A flexible working request must clearly state the change sought, whether it is to be permanent or temporary, and the intended start date. Requests should be specific, realistic and aligned with the principles above.

## **6. Making a Flexible Working Request**

From April 2024, all employees will have a statutory right to request flexible working from the first day of employment. Employees may submit up to **two statutory requests in any 12-month period**.

Requests must be made in writing using the Flexible Working Request Form (Appendix A). All requests should:

- Be submitted with at least 8 working weeks' notice prior to the proposed start date
- Clearly specify the type of flexible working arrangement requested, including if the request is for a permanent or temporary change, and, if so, for how long
- Provide the proposed working pattern and intended start date
- Set out how the employee believes the change may affect their work and how any impact can be managed
- Include the date of any previous applications for flexible working made

Upon receipt of a request, the line manager or Principal will arrange a meeting within **28 calendar days** to explore the proposal. A collaborative discussion will take place, focused on the viability of the proposed change in the context of the school or Trust's operational and safeguarding responsibilities.

Following this, a written decision will be provided within **14 calendar days** of the meeting. If agreed, the new arrangement will be confirmed in writing and a variation to the contract will be issued, with a copy placed on the employee's file.

All flexible working requests must be assessed in light of:

- The nature and demands of the role
- The impact on teaching quality, safeguarding and leadership responsibilities
- The capacity to provide effective cover or reallocation of duties
- The needs of pupils, particularly those with SEND or high needs
- The overall staff deployment and operational model of the school or team

## **7. Decision-Making and Appeals**

The Trust is committed to ensuring that all flexible working requests are considered fairly, promptly and in line with legal obligations.

Requests may be declined only for one or more of the eight statutory business grounds:

- The burden of additional costs
- Detrimental impact on ability to meet pupil or organisational demand
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact on quality
- Detrimental impact on performance
- Insufficiency of work during the periods proposed
- Planned structural changes

Where a request is refused, the reasons will be clearly stated in writing.

If an employee believes their request has not been handled reasonably or in accordance with this policy, they may appeal in writing within **10 working days** of the decision. Appeals should be submitted to the CEO (for central staff) or to the next appropriate senior leader not involved in the original decision. An appeal meeting will be arranged, and a written response provided within **10 working days**. The appeal outcome is final.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The CEO holds overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy across the Newman Catholic Trust. The Trust draws on the support and guidance of its external HR providers, who have been consulted in the drafting of this policy and are aware of its content.

Each Principal is responsible for:

- Ensuring all requests are properly logged and processed within expected timeframes
- Notifying the CEO of any complex or high-impact cases
- Submitting data on flexible working patterns, approvals and refusals via Every HR and the Principals' Report

Data will be monitored centrally to:

- Review equity and consistency across settings
- Identify trends that may affect workforce planning
- Ensure legal compliance and operational effectiveness

This policy will be reviewed every **two years**, or sooner if:

- There is a change in employment legislation
- Significant casework or feedback highlights an area for development
- The Trust undertakes a wider review of its People Strategy

## **Appendix A: Flexible Working Request Form**

### *Employee Details*

<i>Full Name</i>	
<i>Job Title</i>	
<i>School / Department</i>	
<i>Line Manager / Principal</i>	

### *Request Details*

<i>Type of Flexible Working Requested</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Part-Time</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Term-Time Only</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Staggered Start/Finish Times</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Job Share</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Remote/Hybrid</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other: _____</i>
<i>Proposed Start Date</i>	
<i>Proposed Working Pattern</i>	
<i>Reason for Request</i>	
<i>Impact on Pupils/Colleagues/Organisation</i>	
<i>Suggestions to Mitigate Challenges</i>	

### *Additional Information*

<i>Previous Requests in Last 12 Months</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Yes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No</i>
<i>If yes, provide dates and outcome</i>	

### *Declaration*

<i>Employee Signature</i>	
<i>Date</i>	

### *To be completed by Principal / CEO*

<i>Decision</i>	
<i>If declined, state reasons (refer to statutory business grounds)</i>	
<i>Conditions, review periods or amendments</i>	
<i>Name of Reviewer</i>	
<i>Signature</i>	

<i>Date</i>	
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